

## Rotherham Library and Information Service

### A modern, vibrant, library service – developing a new service model for Rotherham

#### Rationale – how we arrived at our proposals

##### Introduction

A review of the Library & Information Service has been requested, as per the Cabinet meeting on November 23rd 2011.

This document sets out the process and rationale used to arrive at the current proposals for consultation. The proposed future shape of the service, including service delivery priorities and levels, takes into account the statutory nature of the service, an assessment of local need, available resources and is based on the approved Library Strategy. The Strategy itself was formed from consultation with customers and residents and defines the nature of a modern, vibrant service.

We have worked from the overall premise of putting customers first wherever possible. Where savings have been identified they are proportionate and do not conflict with the implementation of the library strategy nor with the requirement for the service.

A wide range of factors were considered as part of the development of the proposals, including:

- **The statutory duties of the Council**
- **National, regional and local influences**
- **What do Rotherham people value about their library service?**
- **Rotherham's Library & Information Service Strategy 2011-15**
- **An assessment of local need**
- **Resources available**
- **The current and potential performance of the Service**
- **Partnerships**
- **Buildings and location**

#### **1. The statutory duties of the Council**

The council's duty in relation to libraries is set out in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 section 7 which states;

*"It shall be the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof"*

The duty arises in relation to persons "whose residence or place of work is within the library area of the authority or who are undergoing full time

*education within that area...In fulfilling its duty a library authority shall in particular have regard to the desirability*

- of securing...that facilities are available for borrowing of, or reference to books and other printed matter..., sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirements both of adults and children...*
- of encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service, and of providing advice as to its use and of making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required by persons using it”*

It should be noted that although this service must be ‘comprehensive and efficient’ there is currently no agreed test of this description. However, as library authorities across the country consider options for future service delivery, further research and guidance is emerging. The core responsibilities as detailed above do not include a specification, for example, for specific numbers of buildings and indeed they may be met and actively promoted through other mechanisms, such as home visits, mobile services, outreach collections and online services.

In considering whether the service is **comprehensive**, we have had regard for a wide range of information about the borough’s make up and the differing needs of its population; the numbers and types of people who visit libraries – who may, or may not, borrow books; people who do not currently use libraries; the views of participants in previous consultation and other related factors.

In considering whether the service is **efficient**, we have had regard to detailed information and analysis of the costs of different parts of the existing service; the resources available to the Council now and in the future; the current performance of the Service and where it could improve; alternative options for delivering services in the future and opportunities for ways of continuing to improve services whilst releasing efficiency savings.

## **2. National, regional and local influences**

There are a wide range of key strategic influences which have played a key role in determining the proposals. These influences have been considered as part of the development of the Library and Information Service Strategy 2011-15 and re-considered as part of the assessment of local need for library and information services. Nationally, regionally and locally library authorities are reflecting on the twin challenges of delivering high quality, accessible, local services whilst improving value for money. They have been supported in this work by an increasing number of reflective reports on the value and role of library services and alternative models of service delivery.

For example, in March 2010, the DCMS published a policy statement on their Modernisation Review of Public Libraries. The report aimed ‘to help libraries adapt to the internet revolution, grasp the opportunities of digital technology, and to respond to the decline in use of existing services, the current economic

climate and the public's expectation of more customer-focused public services'.

The document contained proposals to help libraries achieve six aims:

- Drive the quality of all library services up to the level of the best
- Reverse the current trend of decline in library usage and grow the numbers using the library service
- Respond to limited public resources and economic pressures
- Respond to a 24/7 culture and to changing expectations of people who want immediate access to information
- Grasp the opportunities presented by digitisation
- Demonstrate to citizens, commentators and politicians that libraries are still relevant and vital

It also included the definition of a "core" and "local" offer:

"The Government believes that the community should be at the heart of the public library service and building on the work already developed in this area – such as the Chartered Institute of Librarians and Information Professionals (CILIP) guidelines, the Love Libraries campaign and the Youth Offer for Libraries – the Government recommends that all library authorities introduce a Library Offer to the public. The Library Offer will be made up of a 'core offer' – services which Government believes should be offered across all library authorities, and a 'local offer' – services which are shaped and provided at local level. The Library Offer can be communicated to the public but can also illustrate how each library authority is delivering a 'comprehensive service' as required by the 1964 Act."

The report referred to the findings of the Wirral Inquiry (see section 3 below), recognising that decisions regarding the future of library services should be based on a clear local assessment of need. Though library closures may sometimes be necessary, those closures must form part of a strategic approach to service provision and decisions must only be taken after consultation.

This work is further enhanced by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's Future Libraries Programme, launched on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2010 by the Minister for Culture. This formed a partnership between national and local government and, driven by councils themselves, aims to help the library service during the current challenging financial situation, with an ambition to ensure libraries play a central role for communities in the Big Society. Central to the programme is the vision for library services to have greater connection with other local services and an ambition for these services to be designed around the needs of the public, rather than based on organisational boundaries. The programme attempts to spread learning between library authorities, aiming to achieve cost savings, new partnerships and governance models, and demonstrate the advantages of digital opportunities.

The Museums Libraries and Archives (MLA) report: What People Want from Libraries published in December 2010 stems from research into the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century public library users. Following extensive consultation, this report identified a variety of motivations for using the public library – love of reading, study, information, individual learning, children’s education, social contact, quiet time in a safe space. While books are seen as the core offer, the building too is a valuable community asset. The clear finding of the report is that “the public see libraries’ core value as being about reading, learning (particularly children’s education) and finding information”.

The public’s priorities for library services were identified as:

- Good range and choice of books
- Friendly and knowledgeable staff
- Pleasant library environment
- Activities, particularly for children

The report concludes that:

- Public libraries still have value in today’s society
- Libraries can be a social leveller and have a strong social role
- Books are key to the “Library Offer”
- There is potential for greater library usage. Library Services should build on their strengths: unique services, free or low cost services, knowledgeable and friendly staff
- Members of the public do not readily distinguish between ‘library service’ and ‘library building’

A letter to Councillors from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (3 Dec 2010) includes a number of key areas for consideration prior to any decisions on the future of the service:

- A statement of what the service is trying to achieve
- A description of local needs, including the general and specific needs of adults and children who live, work and study in the area
- A detailed description of how the service will be delivered and how the plans will fully take into account the demography of the area and the different needs of adults and children in different areas (both in general and specific terms)
- The resources available for the service, including an annual budget

Library services are being challenged to review the nature of the services they provide and how those services are delivered against a background of fundamental challenge as books, film and other media become available in new and alternative formats. Whilst our current customers tell us that books in sufficient range, numbers and quality are still important to them; changing digital technologies are opening up content and offering new and exciting ways to deliver services to new audiences.

The Library Strategy and the Library Review aim to position the service to make the most of new developments, whilst also continuing to improve the stock of books, films, music scores etc available in more traditional formats.

### **3. What do Rotherham people value about their Library service?**

We carried out an extensive survey of library users and non users during May/June/July 2010, asking them what they valued and what their priorities were for the future. This research helped inform the Library and information Service Strategy 2011-15. A brief summary of the key points is given below.

People were asked to indicate which of the following were important:

- Library staff are approachable (91%)
- There are books available for me to borrow (89%)
- I have choice to access services without charge (82%)
- I can choose how to spend my time in the library in a relaxed environment (79%)
- The library is situated conveniently with other local community facilities (78%)
- I can use the information and enquiry service at no charge (73%)
- Information about my local community is readily available with no cost (71%)
- There is space to study and learn (63%)
- Information about Council Services is readily available with no cost (61%)
- There are zoned areas for different age groups or activities (61%)
- Use of the internet is readily available with no charge (59%)
- There are organised activities for different age groups/interests (56%)
- There is space to look at displays (56%)
- There are family friendly activities to choose from (52%)
- I can go online from home, whenever I want to 24/7 and access free resources and services (49%)
- There is space for informal meetings (46%)
- There is somewhere to get refreshments (45%)
- There are newspapers and magazines available to read (43%)
- There is space for formal meetings (40%)
- I will be able to access Wi-Fi (when available) when I need to free of charge (39%)

Children told us that the following were important to them:

- Wide choice of books and magazines
- Free internet
- The atmosphere
- Staff
- Family and children's activities
- ICT access
- Accessibility
- Service which is free of charge
- Access to Wi-Fi

People from black and minority ethnic communities told us some of the things they valued most were:

- A wide choice of books, papers and magazines
- Staff
- Free internet access
- The atmosphere
- Family and children's activities

#### **4. Rotherham's Library and Information Service Strategy 2011-15 ([www.rotherham.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/libraries))**

The strategy outlines the way forward for the service and provides a road map to delivering a modern, vibrant, library service. It identifies priorities for service delivery based on corporate priorities and detailed consultation with residents and customers.

##### **"The way forward**

The vision for Rotherham detailed in the Corporate Plan:

"Rotherham is a prosperous place and Rotherham people have choices and opportunities to improve the quality of their lives. Rotherham communities are safe, clean and green and everyone can enjoy a healthy and active life

The need to continue to provide a comprehensive and efficient service for all those who wish to use Rotherham's libraries will be balanced with the requirement to ensure value for money and efficiency savings. Evidence of local need and demand will continue to decisions on service delivery.

##### **We will prioritise our contribution to the following corporate priorities, aims and plans for action:**

Making sure no community is left behind

- More people in our poorest communities are in work and training (05)

Providing quality education; ensuring people have opportunities to improve skills, learn and get a job

- More people have formal qualifications and skills (06)
- More people come to the Town Centre for work, shopping and for things to do and see (08)
- More people are in work or training and less are living on benefits (09)
- Babies and pre-school children with a good start in life (11)

Helping create safe and healthy communities

- People enjoy parks, green spaces, sports, leisure and cultural activities (23)

**We will prioritise our contribution to those areas identified as most important in national and local consultation:**

- Good range and choice of books
- Approachable and knowledgeable staff
- Pleasant library environment
- Choice to access services, including ICT and internet access, without charge
- A library situated conveniently with other local community facilities
- Activities for children

We will, therefore:

- Provide easily accessible, welcoming, local libraries, open to suit local needs, supplemented where necessary by mobile services, services delivered to individual homes and services delivered through partners' outlets
- Help more people to access skills for jobs and for life - including literacy, numeracy and ICT
- Deliver services for vulnerable adults, young people and their families
- Help more people access Council and partners' services easily, swiftly and locally
- Provide a wide range of high quality reading material for adults and young people, in appropriate formats including large print, audio and digital.
- Provide free access to a range of information resources including the internet, enabling easy access to information and online services
- Train and support staff to ensure they have relevant, up to date knowledge and skills in order to provide an excellent customer service

**How will we do this?**

**We will:**

- Provide easily accessible, welcoming, local libraries, open to suit local needs, supplemented where necessary by mobile services, services delivered to individual homes and services delivered through partners' outlets

**By:**

- Continuing to use the former Library standard of a library within 2 miles of every resident mile radius as a guide, but recognise that using this as a standard approach is not appropriate in all cases. Libraries will be located in the heart of the community in a location which provides good physical access and its services will be open to all.
- Considering workable alternative governance models, as appropriate, in order to achieve this
- Wherever possible, seeking over time to make libraries even more relevant to their communities by increasing the number of functions that they provide by becoming hubs for a range of council services
- Changing opening hours to suit local need e.g. reduced evening and increased weekend hours

- Consolidating opening hours e.g. by “sharing” service hours across neighbouring communities, enabling service points to remain open
- Implementing seasonal opening, recognising the different usage across summer and winter months
- Agreeing an “offer” to customers for each service point, building on Borough wide offer

**We will:**

- Help more people to access skills for jobs and for life - including literacy, numeracy and ICT

**By:**

- Providing free access to books and information
- Providing free internet access
- Providing supported ICT use
- Providing support for readers
- Providing informal and formal learning in partnership with colleagues in Education
- Providing work clubs and advice sessions in partnership with colleagues in Employment
- Ensuring staff have appropriate awareness and skills

**We will:**

- Deliver services for vulnerable adults, young people and their families

**By:**

- Increasing access to the home delivery services and Bookability
- Ensuring the mobile library visits rural and outlying communities
- Offering appropriate materials including Large print, Audio books
- Offering health information and “Choose & Book” in partnership with colleagues in health
- Offering and enabling library membership from birth
- Supporting children’s literacy in partnership with Imagination Library and other partners
- Making Bookstart a priority in our services for under 5s
- Offering a range of activities for under 5s and their families
- Delivering the summer reading challenge in partnership with schools
- Offering holiday activities in partnership with other Cultural Services
- Offering services to and in partnership with schools and the Youth Service

**We will:**

- Help more people access Council and partners’ services easily, swiftly and locally

**By:**

- Exploring options to consolidate services whilst retaining the core identity of the library service.
- Sharing premises with council and other partners



- Exploring options to deliver services in the places that people go to, including retail outlets, children's and youth centres, community buildings and health centres
- Ensuring effective representation on strategic and Borough wide partnerships.
- Improving marketing and awareness of the service

**We will:**

- Provide a wide range of high quality reading material for adults and young people, in appropriate formats including large print, audio and digital

**By:**

- Ensuring staff have the necessary skills and awareness to promote, develop and manage the stock locally
- Reviewing the current supplier and stock management arrangements
- Monitoring and improving value for money from the stock purchasing arrangements
- Making best use of the library management system and specialist tools to monitor the availability and use of stock
- Ensuring that we prepare for future trends e.g. e-books
- Improving the efficiency of delivery arrangements
- Reviewing the circulation and allocation of stock
- Ensuring that staff have the necessary skills to maintain the stock, analyse usage and suggest improvements locally, in partnership with customers

**We will:**

- Provide free access to a range of information resources including the internet, enabling easy access to information and online services

**By:**

- Continuing to develop, refresh and improve the People's Network
- Offer access to relevant online resources, in co-operation with colleagues regionally and nationally
- Develop our website and social networking facilities, improving access to and the interactivity of services

**We will:**

- Train and support staff to ensure they have relevant, up to date knowledge and skills in order to provide an excellent customer service

**By:**

- Transforming the customer experience by consolidating customer service staff
- Ensuring consistency in numbers and grades of staff
- Ensuring staffing levels are appropriate to the level of required service delivery
- Redistributing staff based on local need
- Embedding essential skills within all staff

- Prioritising ongoing staff training as essential for continuing best practice
- Embedding new ways of working to ensure high quality, customer-focused, flexible and innovative service delivery

**In addition, we will continue to ensure value for money and ensure that our services are delivered effectively and efficiently, by:**

- Learning from the “Future Libraries Programme”
- Undertaking a regional pilot to assess options for cross boundary provision
- Consideration of trust options or other means of delivery
- Monitoring and awareness of various alternative governance options
- Learning from the Mowbray Gardens community management programme and piloting in a number of additional libraries e.g. Brinsworth, Thorpe Hesley, Swinton, Wickersley
- Producing and implementing volunteers policy
- Rationalising and restructuring current management tiers and support services
- Reviewing the arrangement with Hospital Trust
- Reviewing partnership agreements where there are co-located services

**We will measure the impact of how we are achieving this by monitoring and improving:**

- Numbers of visits
- Numbers of visits per staff hour
- Cost per visit
- Numbers of active borrowers
- Increased customer satisfaction (PLUS surveys)
- Achieving Customer Service Excellence
- Numbers of local people involved in service delivery
- Numbers of volunteers
- Numbers taking part in holiday activities
- Numbers taking part in learning activities
- Numbers taking advantage of access to work initiatives
- Numbers of children under 5 registering
- Numbers accessing the Home delivery service and Bookability
- Collecting case studies to illustrate the quality of the experience that customers are receiving.”

## **5. An assessment of local need**

The assessment of local need sets out the key findings arising out of relevant data and builds on the work and plans set out in the Library and Information Service Strategy. We have considered:

- the demographic composition of our communities
- the way that communities use their local libraries
- their management by the Council
- what our residents tell us about the service

Need is considered in the broadest sense, based on the circumstances, habits and preferences of local communities. This includes:

- social conditions and access
- demand, service usage and performance
- resident feedback

The report following the DCMS inquiry into **Wirral Libraries** in 2010 concluded that the Council's proposals breached its statutory duties. It had failed to consult residents and thereby assess local needs; its proposals failed to meet the needs of children or deprived communities; and its failure to have a strategic plan or a development plan for the service meant the authority could not explain how its proposals would meet the needs of the public. The report contains a useful definition of a local needs assessment for a public library service. Sue Charteris, who chaired the inquiry, set out the criteria on which any assessment of need and efficiency should be based, as follows.

In each case, the criterion is followed by a summary of how we have addressed the issues.

- *Consideration of the wide range of those needs caught by the definition of all those who live, work and study in the area, and the specific needs of adults and children and young people of all ages*

Our ongoing comprehensive Equalities Assessment considers how the proposals impact on local communities. The library service is a universal offer to all residents; it will therefore need to change as the needs of residents change. For example, when planning for the future of the library service we take account of such trends as the aging population identified in the needs assessment: "The number of people in Rotherham over 65 is projected to increase by more than a half by 2028, from 41,500 to 61,400. The number of people over 85 will almost double (+96%) from 5,000 to 9,800 by 2028. Although people will tend to remain healthy for longer than they do now, healthy life expectancy is not rising as quickly as life expectancy overall. The rising numbers of older people, particularly those in the oldest groups will have major implications for all services, (including libraries), used by older people." This demographic change may lead to changes such as alterations to opening hours, the range of materials provided, the way services are delivered and the support offered by staff.

The service solicits regular customer feedback through surveys and customer comments; works closely with many communities and organisations to target 'hard to reach' groups and evaluates events and activities. Library staff produce and update community profiles for each library and work with other council colleagues and partners to utilise data to identify the needs of those who do and don't use our services.

- *An assessment of accessibility – drawing on travel data including car usage data, public transport routes and the cost of services*

The Library Service has to be accessible as well as available. For example, where we have proposed changes to opening hours we have considered the location of the library, its proximity to public transport, alternative services available locally and the make up of the current customer base. We continue to aim to provide a library service within 2 miles of all residents of Rotherham. The Library and Information Service Strategy 2011-2015 recognised the importance of accessible locations for library buildings

- *Consideration of the views of existing users, and an attempt to analyse the reasons and motivations of non users and how their use could be encouraged;*

This has already been taken on board to some extent in consultations for the Library and Information Service Strategy 2011-15. This process will continue in the consultations involved in this Library Review.

- *An assessment as to whether there is any differential impact (via an equalities impact assessment) on whether any specific communities or groups would suffer any adverse impacts as a result of the changes to the service*

This will be addressed in detail in the Equalities Assessment.

- *Consideration of information from partner organisations and other departments, including reference to learning strategies for children and adults, links with social and adult care, and employment initiatives.*

The consultation process will include meetings with service user groups, discussions with partners including other authorities, and officers from other departments. The views expressed will inform the proposals. It is expected that throughout the process consideration will be given to new and or amended ways of operating the service that might be more efficient and effective.

- *Whether the library buildings are fit for purpose, and or in the right place to serve the needs of the community;*

The Library Strategy 2011-2015 recognised the importance of accessible locations for library buildings. An ambitious programme of additional and refurbished libraries (6 in the last 6 years), including opportunities for shared services, has proved very successful in increasing participation. The location of buildings is largely historical – a relatively large number ringed around and close to Rotherham town, others based on West Riding County Council locations, with more duplication in the centre and north than in the south of the borough. Some current library buildings are clearly not in the right place to be easily accessible by all sections of the community e.g. Thurcroft. Others would benefit from updated facilities, e.g. Brinsworth, where there is an urgent need to attract investment to make the library fit for purpose. The redevelopment of the town centre and the relocation of the Central library

have potential implications for those communities adjacent to the improved provision.

- *whether there is scope for more effective use of resources, through for example flexible staffing arrangements, self-issuing, or the Community Asset Transfer model or partial model;*

Self issue and return was introduced in Rotherham Libraries in 2008 at Wickersley Library and subsequently at Mowbray Gardens Library, Central Library and Aston Library. As part of this process, staff have embraced new ways of working that are both more efficient and more customer focused. Investment in Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) at Riverside has improved self issue and return as well as making stock management more efficient. Consideration will also be given to alternative proposals for service delivery during the consultation process. A pilot at Rawmarsh library and customer service centre will assess the benefits and challenges of joint delivery of services. .

- *whether there is scope to provide the service more efficiently via delivery partnerships within and outside of the authority, for example through Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with other council functions;*

The shared service strategy pursued by the library service since 2007 has resulted in a number of successful shared buildings. Thorpe Hesley – a partnership with a local church; Wickersley – a partnership with a parish council; Mowbray Gardens - a successful Big Lottery bid around community engagement and partnership; Aston Library - a Joint Service Centre with Health and Council partners and Riverside House – which includes a library, heritage and arts space adjacent to a customer service centre and which is co-located with the majority of Council services. Rawmarsh Joint Service Centre, including Health and Council partners, opened very recently. Rotherham Libraries are also in discussions with neighbouring boroughs to try and identify efficiency savings through joint working.

- *Whether there is demand for the services in the way that they are currently offered;*

Every local community, whether a geographic community or community of interest, is different. There is a strong sense of ownership of local services within Rotherham – customer feedback often includes the expression “our library” or “my library”. The needs assessment, previous consultation and analysis of usage demonstrates that there is a need for library services in every community in Rotherham. Consideration has been given, however, as to whether in some local areas, the service might be better delivered in a different way.

Visitor figures to Rotherham’s Libraries (see Assessment of Need document) show that there is a disparity in the use of existing libraries. A number of reasons have been put forward for this, but a key factor appears to be location within the community. One demonstration of this is the increased usage of Aston library after its relocation from relatively limited access school premises

to a shared building with Health and Council partners. In Thurcroft, where the library is based in a school there is limited access to or even awareness of library service by the wider local population. Demand at Kimberworth and Kimberworth Park is also relatively low, with evidence that those local populations also use other libraries, particularly the town centre. Those local populations might be better served through accessing the improved library service within Riverside House, Greasbrough Library or mobile/HLS services.

- *Whether the buildings are beyond their useful life and what the scope of shared facilities might be;*

After considerable investment has been put into new builds and refurbishments of libraries in Rotherham, there is now only one building remaining that is completely unfit for purpose and beyond its useful life – Brinsworth Library. Proposals being considered include replacement of the current building or movement to a new location working in partnership with the Parish Council. The possibility of shared facility or mobile arrangements for other libraries is either being considered or will be as part of the consultation process for this review.

- *Whether a physical presence is necessary, taking into account the particular needs of that community, and if it could be replaced by other means such as a mobile service;*

This is an area that needs to be considered as part of the needs assessment and reflected on as part of the consultation. For different reasons, this consideration is particularly pertinent to Thurcroft, Kimberworth and Kimberworth Park. In addition to our physical library buildings our service can also draw on other areas of outreach e.g. Mobile and Booklink services and online services.

- *Whether steps are needed to encourage use of library provision.*

Satisfaction rates amongst customers are consistently higher than amongst residents as a whole, implying that once residents use the service, their opinion of it improves. The Library and Information Service Strategy makes reference to the need to raise awareness and encourage use of service.

“We will continue to encourage more people to use our services, more often, by implanting a sustained marketing plan. Our key messages will be developed in cooperation with the corporate Communications and Marketing Team and will include the following key points:

Rotherham’s libraries:

- promote a love of reading and space where people can engage in informal learning, develop skills and improve their lives.
- provide children and young people with a safe, inspiring place to learn, explore their creativity and find their talent.
- support businesses and contribute to the sustainability and regeneration of our local communities

- are welcoming spaces, open for all to use to improve their lives and their communities
  - offer information and reading services that can improve the health and well being of customers
  - bridge the digital divide and are, for many people, an essential point of access to online knowledge resources”
- *While this is not an exhaustive or definitive set of criteria, I would expect a ‘reasonable’ authority to use such evidence, together with an assessment of resources available, to devise a comprehensive vision and development plan for the service, which addresses these considerations within the development plan. It may, having done this, still draw different conclusions than those others might draw, and it might make decisions that are unpopular, but importantly, these decisions would be based on evidence which could be used to demonstrate the comprehensiveness and efficiency of the service provided by reference to demonstrable need and resources.”*

Officers consider that the service that would be delivered by the Library service after the possible implementation of the proposals would meet the requirement to be both comprehensive and efficient. In this context officers recognise that

- while we continue to aim to provide a library within 2 miles of every resident, we recognise that in some areas such as Thurcroft, Kimberworth and Kimberworth Park, consideration could be given as to whether a comprehensive service can still be delivered to all without the need for a physical building. ‘Comprehensive’ has therefore been taken to mean delivering a service that is accessible by all residents using reasonable means, including good transport links to other libraries, mobile library service, booklink and digital technologies
- an efficient service must make the best use of the assets available in order to meet its core objectives and vision, recognising the constraints on Council resources
- decisions about the Service must stem from the Library and Information Service Strategy 2011-15 which has been approved by members

## **6. Resources available**

Difficult decisions have been made and will continue to need to be made in future years due to the challenging financial circumstances facing the Council.

It has been recognised that decisions on future service delivery need to be based on an assessment of need whilst considering the resources available and appraising options for releasing savings. An indicative target for savings of £500,000 was agreed by members in November 2011.

The budget for the Library and Information Service (2011-12) was £3,313,975. This included:

- Community libraries £1,169,097
- Central Library £378,351
- Mobile libraries £180,585
- Casual staff contracts/additional hours £86,505
- Building maintenance £51,888
- Materials fund £504,101
- Service delivery support £439,209
- Group management £244,770
- Services to communities £259,469

It can therefore be demonstrated that the costs of the service fall into three broad areas – stock, staff (which is partly dictated by the number of buildings and the hours they are open) and the buildings themselves.

The priorities for the service identified by residents and included in the Library and Information Services Strategy indicated the need to continue to deliver broad based services across Rotherham, with opening hours, stock provision and service delivery based on local need – any savings released are therefore spread across the range of expenditure.

The proposed option for future service delivery identifies savings in the following areas: changes to opening hours and two Library closures, reduction in buildings maintenance due to the relative balance of newer/refurbished libraries, changes to the delivery of events and activities, changes to mobile services, changes to staffing models, reductions in the materials fund in line with the new service model.

The Library Service is committed to continue to improve and develop the service whilst still recognising the need to explore efficiency savings.

## **7. The current and potential performance of the Service**

Traditionally, the measurement of performance of library services has concentrated on physical visits to libraries and the borrowing of books. It is being increasingly acknowledged that, whilst these remain at the heart of what libraries do, they now provide an increasingly wide range of services - a welcoming, local meeting space; a place to read and relax; access to information and local services; access to the internet, study facilities or events and activities. People may borrow books (either in print or digital format) without visiting a building - through outreach, home visits or online services. Library services will therefore need to continue to develop new indicators which more accurately reflect the impact and take up of the service.

Currently, library visits are counted by electronic people counters situated at the entrances to libraries or manually by staff. These figures give us the most accurate usage levels. The library management system provides statistics on numbers of books borrowed and the number of people who borrow books. A national survey of customer satisfaction, carried out in a three year cycle, tells us in detail what our existing customers feel, whereas resident surveys give a broader picture. All events and activities in libraries are evaluated and future events designed according to customer feedback.



Whilst these figures can tell us a lot about the performance of an individual library, local demographics need also to be taken into account. For example, increases in book borrowing in an area of traditionally low literacy levels can be more “meaningful” than similar increases in a relatively literate area of the Borough. The difference a library makes to local community can often be better assessed through the use of case studies and impact assessments than the analysis of figures in isolation. The proposals for delivery include comparative and joint studies of the communities served by Mowbray Gardens and Wickersley libraries respectively, in order to learn more about best practice in these areas.

### Summary of performance 2007-12

Rotherham Library and Information Service has undergone a transformation. RMBC strategy during this time has been to deliver significant capital investment in Library buildings through an ambitious programme of construction, modernisation, replacement and refurbishment. An excellent record of opening 6 new libraries in 6 years is one that the Borough can be proud of.

As these new libraries came on stream we aimed to improve the service to customers across the service, so the concept of “New Ways of Working” for staff was introduced and was implemented as new libraries opened at Thorpe Hesley in 2007 (where an innovative fold-away library was introduced to the borough), Wickersley in 2008, Mowbray Gardens in 2009 and Aston in 2010. The opening of both Riverside and Rawmarsh will continue this success into 2012. In essence this comprises the following.

- Partnership thinking and community involvement
- Staff engagement with customers, including proactive work within the geographic and online community
- Managing the library space and seeing it as our customers and visitors do
- Introduction of innovative procedures including flexible staffing and self-service

Elements of this purposive proactive and customer focussed working have also been introduced in other libraries around the Borough. There has been positive feedback on the greater engagement with customers and the appearance of stock display and general approval from customers for the introduction of self-service as an option.

Other successes over the last four years are the Big Lottery funded project to redevelop Mowbray Gardens library; the recognition and success of our safe surfing/cybersafe guide; introducing many local people to the internet; increasing participation in the Summer Reading Challenge; the Children’s Book Festival; improved quality of our bookstock including e-audio books; working with health partners and leading on health information – nationally, regionally and for local people; the introduction of a new library management system; the refresh of the People’s Network; the development of the 24 hour

library through access to online services and web 2.0, using the full range of our services to help local people through recessionary times.

As the above illustrates, new libraries have been redesigned with the local community in mind. Increased opening hours across the service, convenient self-service, new computers and furniture, places to relax and socialise, local access to wider council services, community involvement in the running of their library and a lively programme of events and activities have all been part of their development and have assisted the positive upturn in performance.

## **8. Partnerships**

The Library Strategy 2011-15 summarises the Library Service approach to wide-ranging partnerships, which remains central to the way the service operates. The needs assessment points to the fact that a third of Rotherham's population live in areas that are the most deprived 20% in England and that the key drivers are Health, Education and Skills and Employment. The recession has meant that the free local services offered by Libraries are even more appreciated and we have supplemented these through partnership work.

Over the last few years, partnership working at both strategic and local level has proved most fruitful. It has been vital in areas such as planning new library and joint buildings, libraries as local venues, literacy and learning initiatives, digital literacy, health, employment, looked-after-children and other safe-guarding initiatives. There is a breadth of joint working, partnership and collaboration across the service. There are, of course, always other partnerships that can be developed and we are always keen to explore them where they can contribute to improving the efficiency, range and relevance of our library offer.

In the Yorkshire and Humber region, Rotherham currently chairs the Society of Chief Librarians (Yorkshire) group which is made up of the 15 authorities in the region. We constantly work in partnership across the region on various projects, delivering economies of scale. We are also exploring opportunities to work together to find new models of public library service delivery that may help to deliver improved efficiency by working across boundaries.

## **9. Buildings and location**

As communities grow and change, the location of buildings and services within those communities needs to be reviewed. The "right" location can influence the success or failure of a service in terms of takeup and satisfaction. A building which is difficult to access due to design, transport, signage or infrastructure will become a barrier to usage.

A library is much more than a building but the physical environment is an important success factor. We can see this success in the investment in Rotherham's new Libraries when combined with the introduction of a new ways of working culture. Although we have tried to bring in some of these

ideas into our older libraries in terms of making the design more flexible and introducing some new ways of working, they are too often located a distance from high streets and public transport e.g. in Thurcroft and Kimberworth Park. Today's library user, like users of other public facilities, needs a convenient location. Proximity to other services, shops, transport links and other public buildings is a distinct advantage, as is the co-location of sympathetic services.

In Rotherham, the libraries that are in the best condition and in the best locations are visited the most. For example, there has been a significant rise in use since the move of Aston Library from a relatively inaccessible location in the Comprehensive School into the new Joint Service Centre: active membership rose by 35%, issues by 37% (68,821) and IT usage by 6%. The library is now easier to access and now has more of a community feel and focus, rather than being thought of as a 'school' library.

Today's library services may be offered in buildings alongside other public services. The co-location strategy that we have followed with our new libraries has also been a major success factor. e.g. Thorpe Hesley, Wickersley, Aston, Riverside House, Rawmarsh.

Where buildings are relatively inaccessible and/or by their size or nature limit the scope to deliver appropriate services in an efficient and effective way, we have proposed alternatives. We took account of the geographical spread of libraries across the borough. High street and or co-locations and proximity to public transport were preferable to ensure maximum footfall. Libraries such as Thurcroft, Kimberworth Park and Kimberworth are limited by their position and their proximity to better located buildings such as Riverside, Greasbrough, Wickersley, Dinnington and Aston. Issues of deprivation and community access were also considered. Key issues relate to the access to libraries for younger people (under 19) older people (over 60) and people with disabilities.

Long term viability of buildings has also been considered. In particular we would hope that partnership with the Parish Council in Brinsworth would lead to the investment needed for a new Library space. The present building is not fit for purpose and a solution is therefore being sought with some urgency.

### **Conclusion and proposals**

- Customers need buildings and services which are accessible, safe, welcoming and well maintained.
- In order to serve all communities, and taking into account the travel habits of current customers, we will continue to aim to provide a library within 2 miles of every resident, with a range of opening hours to suit local need.
- We will close two libraries at Kimberworth and Kimberworth Park. However, there will be minimal impact on the numbers of residents who live within 2 miles of a library.
- We will change opening hours, prioritising a number of libraries in the north, south and town centre, improving access to other Council services.

- Opening hours at the remaining libraries will be set according to actual and potential usage. Some may be open less than they are now.
- Where opening hours are reduced, we will work with partners and communities to increase opening hours where possible in the future.
- We will refocus the mobile library service to improve access to services across the Borough.
- We will spend £386,193 on books and other materials, reducing the spend per head of population from £1.98 to £1.52, in line with the changes to service provision. We believe that this means we will be able to continue to provide a wide range and choice of books.
- We will refocus the roles of staff to support the delivery of a modern, vibrant service.
- We will continue to deliver services to our most vulnerable communities, including children, young people, families, and the elderly.
- We will continue to improve e-enabled services.
- The proposals mean it will cost around £500,000 less to deliver the library service.

#### Closures:

The needs assessment showed us that we could deliver the service to people living in the Kimberworth and Kimberworth Park areas in a different way than present. The population maps show clearly that the existing static library buildings are close to other libraries in terms of the 2 mile radius guideline. Local people are already accessing Greasbrough Library and could benefit from the new Riverside House service which is now even nearer than the old Central Library. In addition, we plan to supplement this access with mobile/home visit provision as appropriate.

#### Opening hours:

In terms of proposed opening hours changes, it is significant that not only are some reductions very small but also that some opening hours will be increased to take account of trends that show the local need. Some examples of this are Mowbray Gardens, Wath, Riverside, Aston and Rawmarsh.

#### What will this mean for each library?

- **Aston Library** – This will operate as a “hub” site for the south of the borough, will take advantage of opportunities to offer improved and additional services in partnership with Customer Services and Health
- **Brinsworth Library** – We aim to develop a shared building model with the Parish Council, delivered by a Community Management Board, learning from our experiences in Mowbray Gardens
- **Dinnington Library** – This will operate as a “hub” site for the south of the borough, will take advantage of opportunities to offer improved and additional services in partnership with Customer Services and other co-located local services
- **Greasbrough Library** – We aim to increase access to other Council services through direct provision in the library

- **Kiveton Park Library** – We will pilot seasonal opening, recognising the variations in demand for services
- **Maltby Library** – We will take advantages of opportunities to offer improved services in partnership with Customer Services, on a “campus” approach
- **Rawmarsh Library** – We will take advantages of opportunities to offer improved services in partnership with Customer Services, piloting a merged staffing structure and extended opening hours
- **Swinton Library** - We will take advantages of opportunities to offer improved services in partnership with Customer Services
- **Thorpe Hesley Library** - We will build on the existing close links with the community, piloting ways to improve the enlistment, training and use of volunteers to add value to existing services
- **Thurcroft Library** – We will pilot term time/seasonal opening in the present school premises and explore other methods of delivery to improve access to library services
- **Wath Library**- This will operate as a “hub” site for the north of the borough and will take advantage of opportunities to offer improved and additional services in partnership with Council colleagues
- **Mowbray Gardens Library and Wickersley Library** - 2 libraries which are relatively close geographically, but which serve very different communities with different needs. We will learn from the best practice in both Libraries so that the staff share the learning with each other and consider and develop joint approaches to areas such as partnerships, reading and stock, activities, staffing etc
- In **Riverside House** we will continue to provide a flagship service for the whole Borough.

### Summary of proposals

Library	Current Hours	Visits per yr	Active borrowers	Proposal
Central	52.5	346335	11499	Increase hours to 55 per week. “Flagship” provision for borough at Riverside House
Aston	44.5	53155	3158	Increase hours to 49 per week. “Hub” site for south of borough. Link to customer services
Brinsworth	26.5	10473	670	Reduce opening hrs to 26 per week. Explore potential for new build/community management model with Parish Council
Dinnington	49.5	72843	3709	Reduce opening hours to 49 per week. “Hub” site for south of borough. Link to customer services
Greasbrough	40	30678	1285	Reduce opening hours to 32 per week. Relocate district office and offer access to additional Council services
Kimberworth	16.5	9942	643	Close: additional provision from mobile library
Kimberworth Park	17.5	10514	603	Close: additional provision from mobile library

<b>Kiveton Park</b>	35.5	29252	1252	<b>Reduce opening hours to 32 per week. Pilot seasonal opening</b>
<b>Maltby</b>	50	45156	3559	<b>Reduce opening hours to 40 per week. Link to customer services on “campus” basis</b>
<b>Mowbray Gardens</b>	32	48655	1508	<b>Increase opening hours to 40 per week. Case study on impact and best practice linked to Wickersley</b>
<b>Rawmarsh</b>	32	20236	1039	<b>Pilot for joint Library &amp; Customer Service Centre, involving temporary increase in hours and during which opening hours will be reviewed</b>
<b>Swinton</b>	44	57682	2639	<b>Reduce opening hours to 40 per week. Link to customer services</b>
<b>Thorpe Hesley</b>	26	12223	661	<b>Retain current opening hrs. Pilot work with volunteers to add value to current service</b>
<b>Thurcroft</b>	26.5	21909	655	<b>Reduce hours to 26 per week, term time only. Additional provision from mobile during school holidays</b>
<b>Wath</b>	46	113794	2979	<b>Increase opening hours to 49 per week. “Hub” site for north of borough. Access to additional Council services</b>
<b>Wickersley</b>	45	66990	3642	<b>Reduce opening hours to 40 per week. Case study on impact and best practice linked to Mowbray Gardens</b>

**There is a need for a library service in every community in Rotherham. However, every community is different. We have therefore considered if the service could be delivered differently in some places, as appropriate, within the overall aim of delivering a modern vibrant and efficient library service across the Borough, bearing in mind the resources available.**

**We believe that the options for consideration will continue to meet the statutory duties of the Council in respect of its library services and provide a modern vibrant library service based on the Library Strategy.**